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ABSTRACT

This action research project describes a program for decreasing disruptive behaviors in the classroom and encouraging children to be more respectful of others. The targeted population was sixth- through eighth-grade students in a Midwestern suburb. The problems of disruptive behaviors and lack of respect were documented using teacher and student surveys, teacher checklists, teacher interviews, and anecdotal records. Analysis of probable causes at each site and a review of the literature indicated that several factors contributed to the problems occurring in the classroom, including family environment and attitude, no accountability for certain actions, and adults' lack of respect for others. Interventions included increased school activities involving parents, cooperative learning projects that reinforced appropriate behavior, and a heightened adult awareness of the importance of appropriate modeling and positive discipline. Post-intervention surveys, checklists, interviews, and observations indicated a decrease in disruptive behaviors in the classroom; more time was needed to determine if the decline in disruptive behaviors was a direct result of the intervention strategies. (Three appendices contain surveys and a checklist. Contains 28 references.) (Author/EV)

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A STUDY OF STUDENTS' DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS AND A LACK OF RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY AND PEERS WITH MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for decreasing disruptive behaviors in the classroom and encouraging children to be more respectful of others. The targeted population consisted of sixth- through eighth-grade regular-education students, and the schools were located in lower/middle class suburban communities of a large city in the Midwest. The problems of disruptive behaviors and a lack of respect were documented with teacher and student surveys, teacher checklists, teacher interviews, and anecdotal records.

Analysis of probable causes at each site and a review of the research indicated that several factors, including family environment and attitude, no accountability for certain actions, and adults' lack of respect for others contributed to the problems occurring in the classroom.

A review of the solution strategies suggested by the researchers, as well as the surveys, checklists, observations, and interviews, resulted in more school activities involving parents, cooperative learning projects that reinforced appropriate behavior, and a heightened adult awareness for the importance of appropriate modeling and positive discipline.

Post-intervention surveys, checklists, interviews, and observations indicated that there was a decrease in disruptive behaviors in the classroom. More time is needed to determine if the decline in disruptive behaviors was a direct result of the intervention solution strategies.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students in the targeted sixth- through eighth-grade English and Physical Education classes exhibit disruptive behaviors, including a lack of respect for authority and peers. Evidence for the existence of such a problem includes student behavior checklists and teacher and student surveys.

Immediate Problem Context

Middle school Sites A, B, and C are involved in the following research. All the information is taken from the 1998 school report cards. Site A is part of a district that contains one K-2 school, one 3-5 school, and one 6-8 middle school. The middle school is primarily white, similar to the district and well above the state average. Site B is part of a district that contains four K-5 schools and one 6-8 middle school. The middle school has a majority of white students, similar to the district but below the state average. Site C is part of a district that contains five K-5 schools and one 6-8 middle school. The middle school consists of mostly white students, but the district percentage of white students is almost 10% lower than the state. This indicates a decline in the white population in the community and an increase in the Hispanic population. Table 1 shows the racial and ethnic background for Sites A, B, and C in relation to one another and to the state.

Table 1

Racial/Ethnic Background and Total Enrollment as of September 30, 1997

Location	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian Pac. Islander	Native American	Total Enroll.
Site A	91.5%	1.5%	5.3%	0.6%	1.2%	342
Site B	56.8%	9.7%	14.8%	18.7%	0.0%	870
Site C	70.6%	1.8%	22.5%	5.1%	0.0%	1,170
State	62.6%	20.8%	13.3%	3.2%	0.2%	1,951,998

At Site A, the concentration of low-income families whose income is below the national level of poverty and those found to be eligible for bilingual education are below that of the state. At Site B, there are even fewer low-income families yet more limited-English-proficient students. Site B has the lowest percentage of low-income families of all three sites but the highest percentage of those students who use English as a second language. At Site C, the percentage of low-income families is quite a bit less than the state, yet the percentage of limited-English-proficient students is similar to the state average. All three sites have students who are part of low-income families, yet Site C, unlike Sites A and B, also has quite a few students who come from very financially secure homes. Table 2 shows the percentage of low-income and limited-English-proficient students for the three sites and the state. There is not necessarily a link between low-income families and limited-English-proficient students.

Table 2

Low-Income and Limited-English-Proficient Students

Location	Low-Income	Limited-English-Proficient
Site A	17.0%	0.0%
Site B	12.4%	7.9%
Site C	19.1%	4.4%
State	36.3%	6.3%

Table 3 shows the attendance, mobility, and chronic truancy of Sites A, B, and C in relation to that of the state. All three sites have lower mobility rates than the state average. However, only Sites B and C have attendance rates higher than the state. Site C has the lowest chronic truancy percentage of all three districts as well as the lowest number of chronic truants.

Table 3

Attendance, Mobility, and Chronic Truancy

Location	Attendance	Mobility	Chronic Truancy	Number of Chronic Truants
Site A	93.7%	11.9%	3.8%	13
Site B	94.3%	14.8%	1.5%	13
Site C	95.7%	14.3%	0.4%	5
State	93.9%	18.2%	2.3%	43,167

The average teaching experience of Site A, as well as the percentage of teachers with a Master's degree or above, are below the state average making the percentage of teachers with a Bachelor's degree above that of the state. The pupil-teacher ratio and the pupil-certified staff ratio are also above the state ratio. The average teaching experience of Site B and the percentage of teachers with a Master's degree or above are above the state average. Being that a majority of teachers have higher degrees, the percentage of teachers with a Bachelor's degree is below that of the state. At Site C, the average teaching experience and teachers with a Master's degree is higher than the state. The pupil-teacher ratio, pupil-certified staff ratio, and pupil-administrator ratio are all also higher than the state. Table 4 shows these characteristics for each district and the state.

Table 4

Teacher/Administrator Characteristics

Location	Average Teaching Experience	Teachers w/ Bach. Degree	Teachers w/ Master's and Above	Pupil/Teacher Ratio Elementary	Pupil/ Cert. Staff Ratio	Pupil/ Admini. Ratio
District A	14.5 Yrs	69.7%	30.3%	23.1:1	17.2:1	214.6:1
District B	15.9 Yrs.	36.9%	63.1%	21.1:1	16.5:1	270.8:1
District C	15.6 Yrs.	53.4%	46.6%	20.1:1	15.0:1	267.1:1
State	15.0 Yrs.	53.5%	46.3%	20.0:1	14.6:1	250.6:1

At Site A, the research targeted a sixth-grade English classroom. Site A opened in 1961, and serves the sixth through eighth grade population. An updated library and computer lab were created to provide opportunities in research and technology. The district and the site place a

major focus on technology, and a technology committee was created in 1996. Site A is departmentalized with one language arts, science, math, and social studies teacher per grade. All of the teachers currently teach reading; however, the site is beginning to integrate the language arts and reading curricula into one program. The faculty is divided into grade levels and teams, and the sixth-grade team shares one area of the school for the convenience of the students and other staff members. This team, however, does not share a common planning time, and this hinders the ability of teachers to plan together. The principal is supportive in that she allows time away from the classroom to plan integrated units if teachers request it. The district is also implementing programs for both the learning disabled and gifted student. Students are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities, and there are many opportunities to expand their knowledge base.

The administrative structure of Site A consists primarily of a superintendent, assistant superintendent, and a principal. Site A does not have an assistant principal but does have a behavioral specialist who works with at-risk students and helps with disciplining students in time of need. The principal of the middle school also serves as the assistant superintendent of the district. The principal is very encouraging and supportive in teacher's efforts to improve curriculum units and incorporate technology into the classroom.

At Site B, the research targeted a seventh-grade English classroom. Site B opened in 1974, and also serves the sixth grade through eighth grade population. The latest renovation project was completed over two school years. Phase I was completed in December, 1998, and several changes were made within the gym, the art room, and the music room. The roof was replaced as well. Phase II of the project was completed in late August, 1999. Open-space classrooms were divided by eight-foot walls, new carpeting was installed, and the computer lab

was hooked up to the internet. Also, each class site was wired for a personal computer, a television, and a VCR. Site B is also departmentalized but has several teachers per grade level for all of the core subjects such as, English, science, math, social studies, and physical education. The district and the administration place a special focus on interdisciplinary studies, yet it is difficult to incorporate interdisciplinary units when the teachers are not divided into teams. Most teachers work in their individual classrooms with little interaction with other teachers over the course of the day. In addition to academics, the site places a major emphasis on extra-curricular activities and has many sports and clubs to choose from. The site also has special-education and behavioral programs for students with special needs.

Site B's administration includes one head principal and two assistant principals. The assistant principals are in charge of discipline and school activities. There is also a superintendent of the district and a director of curriculum and instruction.

At Site C, the research targeted an eighth-grade physical education class. Amazingly, Site C opened in 1844, and it is one of the oldest schools still standing in the metropolitan area. The school has withstood many renovation projects and continues to educate approximately 1,500 students each year. In addition to the physical changes made within the school, the administration and staff have recently gone to grouping teachers in teams of different disciplines. The physical education staff, however, makes up one team in themselves. The teams meet weekly and discuss student achievement and progress as well as how to incorporate interdisciplinary lessons into the school curriculum for the purpose of providing transfer between lessons, learning, and the students' lives. The school is departmentalized with several teachers per subject per grade level. Many of the teachers also coach and run after school activities.

The administrative structure of Site C consists of one head principal and two assistant principals. There is also a district superintendent and assistant superintendent. All five administrators are considered very helpful and encouraging by the staff, and they are extremely accessible for students and teachers if needed.

All three districts place a significant emphasis on learning objectives and state education goals provided by the State Board of Education for the 1997-1998 school year. These goals are followed by teachers as they not only plan their daily lessons but their entire annual curriculum. The language arts goals state that as a result of their schooling, students will be able to:

1. Read, comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and use written material.
2. Listen critically and analytically.
3. Write standard English in a grammatical, well-organized, and coherent manner for a variety of purposes.
4. Use spoken language effectively in formal and informal situations to communicate ideas and information and to ask and answer questions.
5. Understand the various forms of significant literature representative of different cultures, eras, and ideas.

The physical education goals state that as a result of their schooling, students should be able to:

1. Acquire movement skills and understand concepts needed to engage in health-enhancing physical activity.
2. Achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical fitness based upon continual self-assessment.
3. Develop team building skills by working with others through physical activity.
4. Understand principles of health promotion and the prevention and treatment of illness

and injury.

5. Understand human body systems and factors that influence growth and development.
6. Promote and enhance health and well-being through the use of effective communication and decision-making skills.

At each site, a student handbook is distributed to students at the beginning of the school year stating goals and expectations of the students and rules of the school. The parents are encouraged to attend school-sponsored activities, such as open-house and parent-teacher conferences to discuss the handbook and the progress of their children. The schools are very similar in that they all place a major emphasis on involving the parents and local community in school activities and functions.

The Surrounding Community

The community of Site A is primarily residential with small businesses and no industry. The site is located in the northwest suburbs of a large metropolitan area and may be considered a resort town. The school report card refers to the district as a medium sized district. Many of the residents no longer have school-aged children, but the district is growing as many families continue to move in to the area. A vast majority of the students are white, and this is representative of the community as a whole.

The students reside in mostly single-family homes. The average home cost is $181,172 and is 20 years old on average. As a majority of the parents residing here have not attended college, it is not a surprise that surveys indicate that only 27% of the current students will go on to attend a four-year college. For this reason, expectations about school work that parents have for their children may be different that the expectations of the teachers.

The community of Site B is also primarily residential but includes a neighboring industrial park. It is also located in the northwest suburbs of a large metropolitan area. The school report card indicates that the site is considered a large district, and many of the families have younger, school-aged children. More than half of the students are white, but a large percentage of students are Asian, Pacific Islander, and Hispanic. These statistics are also representative of the community as a whole.

Many of the families tend to be renters and live in large, multi-unit dwellings. The average home cost is $124, 528 and is 20 years old. Many parents in the community are well-educated and are employed in professional and other white-collar occupations. However, there are many multicultural students whose families speak limited English, and student journal entries have indicated that these parents do not place as high of a value on education as other parents in the community do.

Site C is primarily residential and is also located in the northwest suburbs of a large metropolitan area. The school report card refers to the district as large, and the middle school itself is quite large being that it houses not only the middle grade students but also the district office. Site C is located very close to Site B, and the population is also quite diversified. The percentage of white students is slightly higher than Site B.

The amount of people who rent versus own a home are about equal. There are sections of the community where the socio-economic status might be considered upper-class. However, there is also low-income housing where many of the students live. The average price of a home is $181,143 and is approximately 25 years old. A majority of the community holds professional or managerial jobs, but many do not.

At times, there is tension between those students who come from families who are more financially stable and those who come from low-income households. Due to the fact that there are so many differences in the way students of all races, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds view education and authority figures, the lack of respect for education and educators on the part of the student has truly become a problem in this country.

National Context of the Problem

In today's society, students can be extremely disruptive due to a lack of social skills and respect for authority and peers. Respect is a part of all lives. It does not simply apply to showing consideration for and listening to elders and authority figures. We need to respect one another as equals. The American Heritage Dictionary (1982) defines respect as: "Willingness to show consideration or appreciation" (p.1052). It does not end there, however. There is a spiral effect when there is no mutual respect in the classroom which leads to disruptive behavior, such as talking out in class at inappropriate times, negative peer interaction, and a struggle for classroom control. More time is spent dealing with these disruptions rather than giving quality instruction. Many students do not seem to appreciate the fact that teachers share their time and knowledge with them and are willing to help students become better people by giving of themselves. Also, many students do not show consideration for their teachers' and peers' feelings. Just as there has been a shift in education toward student-centered classrooms, there has also been a shift in the mentality of students that indicates that they feel as if they should be in control of the classroom. Teachers may lose control of the classroom by not initially addressing these problems with their students.

Another issue is that society appears to be becoming desensitized to the way today's youth speaks to and relates with adults. Adolescents feel as if their disrespect is a sign of

independence, and they are able to break free of adults through defiance. Their behavior is considered to be "normal" for their age and is not addressed. This lack of respect, however, is not normal. According to Massing (1996), "We all want to be respected because it makes us feel good, it helps our self-esteem, and it will help us grow to maturity" (p. 1). If teachers, as professionals, are expected to respect their students, "parents should help young adults show respect for their teachers" (Massing, 1996, p. 1). The problems that are occurring in the classroom need to first be addressed at home.

According to the article " 'Baby Boom' Era Teachers. . .(1996)," "Teachers reared in the 'Baby Boom' era cite the breakdown of family structure combined with students' lack of respect for authority as major factors contributing to the erosion of family values today. This lack of respect for authority is also evident in the schools.

> . . .39% of the teachers cited the lack of respect for authority and other persons, a lack of family support or parental involvement, and the rise in single parent family homes that create a lack of family structure and stability. According to the teachers surveyed, violence (57%), the environment (37%), and improving communities (37%), are of greatest concern to today's students, while minority rights (31%), racial prejudice (28%), and poverty (24%), are of least importance (" 'Baby Boom' Era Teachers. . .," 1996).

The next chapter provides evidence that the problems exist at the targeted sites and addresses some probable causes for these problems.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to provide evidence that disruptive behaviors, including a lack of respect for authority and peers, exist in the classroom, student surveys, teacher checklists, and teacher surveys were distributed, collected, and disseminated.

Student Survey

Students were asked to fill out a questionaire/survey in class and in homeroom regarding their behavior in and out of school about two weeks into the school year (Appendix A). The purpose of this survey was to target the disruptive behaviors typically exhibited by adolescents at each of the three sites, and they were given to three classes (a total of 56 students) and collected in the first two weeks of school. At Site A there were 18 students surveyed, at Site B there were 19 students surveyed, and at Site C there were 19 students surveyed. The survey included questions on behaviors such as accepting others' ideas, willingness to compromise, being supportive in words and actions, bringing necessary supplies to class, knowing what is expected each day, following classroom rules, bringing a positive attitude to class, and doing what an authority figure asks. The students were asked to answer how often they exhibited these behaviors using always, sometimes, hardly ever, or never as their choices. The results of the student survey are recorded in Table 5.

Table 5

Student Survey Results (By Percentage Per Site)

	Always			Sometimes			Hardly Ever			Never		
Site	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
I am accepting of others' ideas	11	15	15	89	85	85	0	0	0	0	0	0
I am willing to compromise	36	40	40	57	58	58	4	2	2	3	3	3
I am supportive in words	57	50	50	36	32	32	7	18	18	0	0	0
I am supportive in actions	29	40	40	57	42	42	14	18	18	0	0	0
I bring materials to class	39	50	80	43	35	20	18	15	0	0	0	0
I know what is expected of me	57	65	75	43	35	25	0	0	0	0	0	0
I follow classroom rules	54	45	60	43	45	40	3	10	0	0	0	0
I have positive attitude	18	25	60	54	65	30	18	5	5	10	5	5
I do what authority tells me	11	30	35	68	60	60	18	7	2	3	3	3

The surveys given at Sites A and B were administered in English classroom while Site C's surveys were administered in P.E. class. A major discrepancy between the sites occurred in bringing materials to class due to the fact that students do not necessarily need materials for P.E. except for their uniform and gym shoes, which students keep in their gym lockers. Students are more often unprepared for English class because they often have to bring assignments, textbooks, folders, notebooks, and pens and pencils with them on a daily basis. Another discrepancy occurred between sites in bringing a positive attitude to class. Site C, being a physical education class, seemed to evoke more positive feelings amongst students. At Sites A

and B, more negative feelings transpired, possibly due to the fact that more is required of them mentally instead of physically. The students seemed to respond similarly to the other questions regardless of the site.

Based on the totals from the 56 students surveyed, the evidence suggests that students are not always exhibiting positive behaviors during class time. Sites A, B, and C, for the most part, had similar results from the student surveys which may be attributed to the similar demographic makeup of the schools or the fact that the students are all about the same age. The second instrument used in providing evidence that disruptive behaviors occur in the classroom is the behavioral checklist.

Teacher Checklist

The teachers at Sites A, B, and C filled out the behavioral checklists to tally the following behaviors that students exhibited: talking out; unprepared for class; socializing; inappropriate language; inappropriate responses (Appendix B). The same 56 students in the targeted classes who took the student survey were evaluated by the teachers as to their performance in the classroom. These numbers were tallied and disseminated at the end of the first quarter of the school year. Teachers who filled out the checklist kept record of the amount of times students exhibited disruptive behaviors throughout the first quarter by marking a checkmark in their gradebook every time a student exhibited one of the disruptive behaviors specified. The gradebooks were coded for each behavior disruption so teachers could quickly and discretely check off when a student was disruptive. The total number of students at each of the three sites (56) was then added together for a percentage of students who were disruptive at least once during the first nine weeks of the school year. The results of the behavioral checklists are recorded and shown below in Table 6.

Table 6

Behavioral Checklist Results (By Percentage Per Site)

Site	A	B	C
Talking Out	44	74	79
Unprepared for Class	33	58	90
Socializing	39	74	100
Inappropriate Language	17	16	53
Inappropriate Responses	44	47	58

The most behavior problems occurred at Site C in the physical education class. This may be attributed to the competitive nature of the classes and the atmosphere in which the students interact. However, according to the teachers, a significant amount of behavioral problems was evident at all three sites and was a cause for concern being that the school year had, in essence, just begun. The final tool used to measure disruptive behaviors was the teacher survey.

Teacher Survey

At Sites A and B, 13 teacher surveys were distributed and collected, and at Site C 14 teacher surveys were distributed and collected in the first two weeks of school and targeted specific disruptive behaviors seen on average in a variety of different classroom settings (Appendix C). A total of 40 teachers were surveyed and asked to keep in mind the students they see on a regular basis. These students included regular-education, honors, and learning disabled students. The behaviors surveyed included raising their hands to participate, being supportive of others and their ideas in class discussions and cooperative groups, being supportive or classroom

rules, being physically prepared for the days activities, responding to authority figures in a respectful manner, accepting instructions without challenging, disagreeing, or arguing, and accepting others' abilities both physically and mentally. While working with groups or in teams, the most important issues are willingness to compromise and being supportive in words. Without the ability to compromise and communicate effectively within a group, success will not be easily achieved. The most important issues for each individual to be successful are being prepared for class, following classroom rules, and doing what authority figures instruct them to do. By following these guidelines, this will ensure that students maximize their learning time. The results of the teacher survey are recorded and shown below in Table 7.

Table 7

Teacher Survey Results (By Percentage Per Site)

	Always			Sometimes			Hardly Ever			Never		
Site	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Students Raise Their Hands	10	5	5	80	90	90	10	5	5	0	0	0
Students Support the Rules	20	10	10	75	85	85	5	5	5	0	0	0
Students are Prepared	15	5	5	85	95	95	0	0	0	0	0	0
Students are Supportive	25	15	15	70	80	80	5	5	5	0	0	0
Students Respect Authority	30	15	15	70	80	80	0	5	5	0	0	0
Students Respect Their Peers	15	10	10	75	85	85	10	5	5	0	0	0
Students Accept Instructions	35	20	20	65	75	75	0	5	5	0	0	0
Students Accept Others	15	5	5	75	80	80	10	15	15	0	0	0

The first four statements pertain to working in cooperative groups or teams. The last five statements are individual guidelines for student success. At Site A, teachers encountered less disruptive behaviors across the board. However, the results of Sites B and C showed a significantly higher number of disruptive occurrences on a daily basis. The consensus was that students do not always raise their hands, support the classroom rules, and accept instructions or others' abilities both mentally and physically. These are classroom disturbances which, overall, take away from learning time and instruction. The following section discusses the probable causes for why these problems do exist in different classroom settings at each of the three sites.

Probable Cause

In analyzing the problem of disruptive behaviors, it is necessary to fully understand why these problems exist. Probable causes include family structure, lack of parental support, immaturity, unreasonable teacher expectations, the media, and a lack of appropriate adult modeling. Beginning with a child's home life, these causes contribute to their disruptive behaviors in school.

Lack of a Solid Family Structure

One probable cause is that students come from a variety of backgrounds, and the breakdown of the family structure can cause students to be upset and display poor behavior in the classroom in an effort to vent their feelings and frustrations. "As a group...Yuppie parents abandon the children to the au pair; working parents turn their kids over to the mall and the video arcade; single parents hang a key around their kids necks and a list of emergency numbers on the refrigerator. Even in the healthiest of families, parents fail to put their children first" (Whitehead, 1992, p. 133). All three sites have middle to lower-class parents who are constantly striving to meet the needs of their children. Often they are able to meet those needs.

Many students who live in single-parent homes do not get the attention they need from an adult at home. Teachers from each site have dealt with many families where the students are forced to miss school to baby-sit younger brothers and sisters or work for their mom and dad as needed. This detracts from the importance of education in itself and may cause students to act out in school.

Students also feel as if they are at fault for problems that occur at home, but frequently these problems are out of their control. Statistics show that children are often born into a challenging environment. "Consider the children who started first grade in 1986: 14 percent were illegitimate; 15 percent were physically or emotionally handicapped; 15 percent spoke another language other than English; 28 percent were poor; and 40 percent could be expected to live in a single-parent home before they reached eighteen" (Whitehead, 1992, p. 128). These family dynamics as well as family attitude toward education are instrumental in shaping students' beliefs and their behaviors. When parents exhibit a positive attitude toward education, this will be interpreted by their children as a sign that education is important. However, a negative attitude and a lack of involvement and support from parents can have an adverse effect on their children.

Lack of Parental Involvement & Support

Teachers work very closely with an abundance of students and have direct contact with their parents. This allows them to witness firsthand the negative behaviors and attitudes that students and parents exhibit. Whether it be a parent who feels his or her child should not make up work late in the school year, a situation where a parent feels that extra-curricular activities are more important than school academics, or an experience with a parent where he or she is an

advocate of the highest school expectations but does not assist his or her child in meeting those expectations, students are in need of support.

Sites A, B, and C all have open house night for parents as well as parent/teacher conferences twice each year. Unfortunately, the number of parents who attend such functions is not always as high as teachers and administrators would like. At Site A, the percentage of parents who attend conferences is approximately 70%. At Site B, the percentage of parents who attend conferences is significantly lower at about 45%. At Site C, the percentage is also significantly lower than Site A and Site B, averaging approximately 20% of the parents who attend. Often, it is the parents of the students who excel in their classes and who do not exhibit disruptive behaviors that attend. This, too, reinforces the good behavior of some students and the negative behavior of others.

Without the support of their parents and families, kids are often disrespectful in an effort to gain personal control. "In our homes, neighborhoods, and communities, young people learn respect by watching other people and their actions and interactions. These informal educational arenas are powerful influences on a child's future behavior. Like all values, you can't teach respect without living it" (Centennial Independent School District #12, 1995-1998, p. 2). During adolescence, children are struggling to gain their independence, but they are often too immature to realize that disrespecting parents and teachers only puts a barrier between them and the people that care about them the most, thus causing conflict and disruptive behaviors.

Lack of Maturity

During adolescence, a lack of maturity may also be a reason that students do not know how to communicate and express themselves in a way that shows respect. It is also possible that they have never been taught a solid value system and what the consequences are for not being

respectful toward others. Students do not always realize how casual comments and teasing can be hurtful.

Being that all three sites are middle school facilities, there is an observed commonality between these students at the junior high age. They often tell on their best friends and make fun of their best friends just to be accepted by others. They may say things to hurt others feelings just as a way to feel better about themselves. These things are often overheard by the teacher, and he or she may feel a need to intervene. A high school principal once said: 'Often students might consider put-downs and cliquish exclusions, jokes about sex or sexual orientation, as harmless and funny' (Walker, 1998, p. 2).

Some students also use inappropriate verbal responses as a way to be funny and get attention. The literature suggests that there are certain students who are actually concerned with the inappropriate language they hear in the classroom from their peers (Williamson & Johnston, 1999). Teachers often spend more time addressing these inappropriate responses and behaviors; therefore, the students who are behaving are neglected. "When a student is disruptive in a classroom or school setting, he or she is showing a lack of concern or regard for others..." (Marshall, 1998, p.31). It is possible, however, that teachers may be partly to blame for the disruptive behaviors that occur within the classroom. A teacher's expectations of his or her students may have a profound impact on the way students behave.

Unreasonable Teacher Expectations

Another cause is that teachers' expectations of their students may be too high or too low. When students are confused or feel that the material is too hard for them, they may tune out their teachers and try to cover their confusion with disruption. The opposite is also true. When teachers do not challenge students in the classroom, students may become bored which can lead

to disruptive behaviors. Sites A, B, and C all have classes for students who are gifted and for those who are learning disabled; however, the remedial students are the ones who often get lost in the shuffle because what may be difficult for one student may come very naturally to another.

Teachers may have the same set of expectations for a given class, and therefore, may be providing the framework for disruptive behaviors to occur. "Remember, a student who does not understand what is expected...can be disruptive" (Stainback, Stainback, & Froyen, 1987, p.15). These expectations may be unclear, and the way a student responds within the classroom is a learned behavior. Often students will mimic the behavior of older brothers and sisters, friends that seem to get the most attention in class, or even behavior they see on television and in movies. Quite often this "learned" behavior is distasteful and completely inappropriate.

Media Influence

These same disruptive behaviors may also be caused by the media, specifically television and movies. Television violence, even if it is staged like professional wrestling, lures children in and makes swearing, inappropriate gestures, and fighting seem acceptable. Also, parents do not always monitor what their children watch on prime time television or what movies they attend. Without parental supervision, children may be confused and feel that violence, inappropriate language, and sexual advances are appropriate at home and at school based on what they see and hear.

Teachers have observed these behaviors and gestures directly in classroom settings and during competitive physical activity on the playground and during physical education class. Ironically, Sites A, B, and C have all had experience with children who had to be removed from class due to the use of certain hand gestures typically done by professional wrestlers on television. Although many of the shows on television and certain movies claim to be "family-

oriented," these shows and movies are often watched by children without their parent's consent and without their parent's supervision. Many of these television shows and movies portray violence as a means of solving problems. They take real life situations and show violent acts as solutions. Children may not be able to distinguish between what is real and what is fictional.

> Mercilessly beating or murdering the persons we disagree with or are angry with, or – worse yet – murdering or injuring people who remind us of those we don't like (perhaps for excellent reasons!) and executing ethnic, racial, religious, and socio-economic class killings in civil wars of assorted sizes in which civilization evaporates, are action that are frowned upon in democratic countries. (Greenberg, 1992, p.14)

Granted these solutions may seem a bit extreme. However, the media often does realistically portray such acts of violence on television and movies, and real-life violent occurrences are happening worldwide as children see on the news. People in the public eye are not always positive role models for children, and with a lack of parent involvement, these children may model the behavior that they see through the media. Without proper adult modeling of good behavior, disruptive behaviors in the classroom may follow.

Inappropriate Modeling

Along with the media, teachers and parents may be guilty themselves of inappropriate modeling. At times adults do not show students the respect that teachers, in turn, demand from them. "As you look about a classroom, you may observe instances in which students are not respected. It might be a teacher who is too involved with another adult or with his or her own paperwork to give attention to a student" (Anderson & Cronin, 1995, p.119). Another way of disrespecting a student is by interrupting them as if what they have to say is menial. "You might notice a teacher who interrupts a student as if the student had nothing important to say, at least

nothing of adult importance" (Anderson & Cronin, 1995, p.119). Inappropriate modeling has been reported at all three sites and has been addressed at Sites B and C in their plans for school improvement and school climate. The students can be more perceptive than they are given credit for, and they may notice that it is hypocritical for teachers to demand respect from students when teachers do not always show respect to the children that they teach. When students make these observations, they may, in turn, show more disrespect to authority and peers to prove a point to others.

In conclusion, these causes are all contributing factors as to why students exhibit disruptive behaviors and show a lack or respect toward others. Teachers, parents, and students need to work together toward a common goal to achieve respect and increase learning and understanding without disruptions. These goals, and possible solutions to these problems, will be more specifically defined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

The Literature Review

Research revealed several possible solutions to improve student behavior in the classroom. These possible solutions include parental involvement, modeling of appropriate behavior, showing transfer and relevance of the curriculum, cooperative learning, incorporating motivational techniques and recognizing appropriate behavior each day, and positive discipline.

Parental Involvement

In order to improve behavior and provide a safe, nurturing climate for learning teachers need to encourage parents to become involved in school activities and become active influences in their child's learning. School is not always considered a safe place to be anymore. Parental involvement helps prevent violence by giving kids support at home. Many students feel that violence can be controlled with parent involvement (University of Lethbridge, 1999). Parents need to listen to their children and provide emotional support for them. Parents also need to enforce household rules and provide logical consequences if the rules are not followed. The same is true for the classroom setting. Although parents and teachers may have different rules, expectations, and cultural values, they need to provide a united front and work together with the children's best interests in mind. This means that parents and teachers must keep in constant contact with each other and discuss the best practices for student achievement. Although parents

and teachers may not always agree on what might be best for a child, it is crucial that they reach some type of compromise between school curriculum and parent involvement. The problem, however, is that this means of working together is extremely idealistic. Compromise is not always easy to achieve, and who has the last word on a child's well-being may be a point of contingency as well. "If schools and teachers expect parents to be involved in the schooling process, they must respect and encourage the parents to maintain their own cultural values and practices and to utilize them as they come into contact with the school environment" (Revilla & Sweeney, 1997, p.2). "...Students respond positively when they see that you truly have their best interests in mind and aren't just making things difficult on purpose" (Sorcinelli, 1991, p.2). This is true for both parents and teachers.

Sites A, B, and C all have parent-involvement sub-committees that meet on a regular basis as part of their school-improvement plan. These committees have come up with several ways to try to include the parents of the students. Some ideas include night awards assemblies for parents of athletes, academic nights to recognize the students who excel academically, parent-student shadow day where parents follow their children around to see what an average day might be like, and parents working in the school library and in the class as helpers. Other suggestions are for teachers to regularly call parents of students who are failing as well as call parents of those who are doing well and send parent newsletters home to be signed so as to be sure the parents are informed. Finally, teachers can have students become "teachers for a day" and invite parents in to watch their children. Having parents in the school more often may increase school pride and decrease disruptive behaviors.

Somehow, through increased parent involvement in schools, a happy medium must be reached that truly shows students that parents and teachers are willing to work together and do

have the best of intentions. Adults need to set a good example by working together for the good of the children. This is how adults can model appropriate behavior to lead their children in the right direction.

Model Appropriate Behavior

Another possible solution is for teachers and parents to model appropriate behavior and respect children for who they are. "Respect children as individuals, taking into account a student's learning style, background, and demands on time" (Wilkens, 1995, p.1). This means that teachers have to understand that different students have different needs from adults to feel secure with themselves and in the learning environment. "Security begins with each of us, in how we treat others, and especially others who may look different, act different, are different" (Walker, 1998, p.1). By modeling the behavior that teachers expect from the students, they are showing them the way that they should be treating others and setting a good example for them to base their own actions on.

Adults can model good behavior in many ways. Teachers and parents can set good examples by looking at children when they talk and by giving them their utmost attention. They should show them that they respect their ideas and opinions, no matter how absurd they might be. "The very profession of teaching calls on us to produce not merely good learners but good people" (Kohn, 1991, p.23). Teachers can make sure they don't interrupt children when they are talking and try to be supportive in how they feel about school, friends, and life in general. Adults should also show students that they are supportive, both verbally and non-verbally, with their own friends' and colleagues' ideas.

In addition, adults (especially teachers) can display a positive attitude toward education and the learning process, which means admitting to them that adults can learn from children just

as children can learn from adults. "With sensitivity and tact, teachers can also employ students as models for the other youngsters to emulate" (McDaniel, 1986, p. 67).

Another way to show interest in learning and the students feelings is by surveying them as to what they like best and least about a class at the end of each semester or year. Teacher can then take this input to reevaluate themselves and their teaching styles. "Teachers fail to see that the students are not rebelling against them and their efforts to become lead managers; they are rebelling against a curriculum that lacks quality" (Glasser, 1992, p.78). If teachers take students' input and revise their curriculum to accommodate both the students' needs and the state objectives, students may stay on-task more often and realize that their opinions have been respected.

Finally, adults can demonstrate good organizational skills and pass on good tips on how to manage a hectic, busy lifestyle. "Teachers who are courteous, prompt, well-organized, enthusiastic, self-controlled and patient tend to produce students who exhibit similar characteristics, at least to some degree" (McDaniel, 1986, p. 67). Teachers can explain the importance of keeping an assignment book and show them how writing down their agenda and homework can be the first step in keeping organized and getting good grades. Sites A, B, and C all pass out school assignment books to the students at the beginning of the year and teachers monitor them daily to make sure that the students have all their assignments written down.

Students who organize their lives and stay focused may be less likely to be disruptive in class. Also, by tying in how important it is to stay organized in school and at home with their own lives, transfer will take place in their minds, and they will begin to see the relevance of what they are being told. This too may lead to less disruption.

Providing Transfer and Showing Relevance

Students need to see the relevance of the school curriculum. Many feel that what they are learning will have nothing to do with their lives, and they become agitated when they believe the teacher is wasting their time. This can lead to disruptive behaviors. It is the teacher's job to explain why the material is important for them to learn. "Respond honestly to challenges explaining-not defending-your instructional objectives and how assignments and exercises contribute to them" (Sorcinelli, 1991, p.2). Teachers need to provide structure, routine, and choices for students so connections can be made to their own lives. Teachers, with the help of their students, need to set the classroom rules the first day of school and explain the consequences of not following these rules. "Very few students function well in a chaotic environment. Even though students may pretend to like the freedom to do whatever they want, whenever they want, most of them prefer structures or routines so they know exactly what they are supposed to do" (Burke, 1992, p. 51). Students will feel empowered when they are able to make decisions regarding their own lives and the environment in which they spend so much time every day, but they still need the teacher to take their suggestions to provide the ultimate structure for the class.

Teachers need to routinely give students time to write down homework assignments, provide weekly instruction on what is to be expected from the students. Teachers should also designate student helpers that have certain jobs (such as passing out papers, cleaning the boards, or watering plants) to make them feel important and provide positive reinforcement to make them feel safe. Students may not feel important in their lives at home and at school, and to make them feel important may validate their sense of self and give them an opportunity to feel good about themselves.

> Even the good students don't feel all that important in school, and the students who receive poor grades certainly can't feel important from the standpoint of academic performance. So they say to themselves, 'I won't work in a place in which I have no sense of personal importance, in which I have no power, in which no one listens to me.' Literally no one in the world who isn't struggling for bare survival will do intellectual work, unless he or she has a sense of personal importance (Gough, 1987, p. 6-7).

Teachers can then make students feel important in the classroom in other ways by involving them in classroom routines. These are just a few suggestions for involving kids and giving them a sense of ownership and pride in their classes. "Give children a sense of your vision for the tone of the classroom" (Charney, 1998, p.93).

In setting up routines, it is important to start with respecting others' ideas, and this can be done if students realize there are consequences for yelling out of turn and interrupting when others are speaking. "Provide as many alternatives to blurting out as possible and clue kids in to signals that help them know when, for example, to raise a hand" (Charney, 1998, p.94). It is possible to incorporate the students' help in setting up such routines and involve them in the decision-making process. "Students should become active partners in identifying standards for conduct during the school day" (Williamson & Johnston, 1999, p.11).

If the students are fully aware of the expectations and consequences of not following the classroom rules, they may be less likely to act inappropriately. "Good teachers have always known that cues improve discipline. The teacher who raises a hand for silence, flips the light switch for attention, or points to a group of gigglers and then presses an index finger to the lips is reminding students of certain rules, procedures, or expectations" (McDaniel, 1986, p. 68). Those

who do follow the rules and understand the standards and expectations should then be rewarded as well.

Recognize Appropriate Behavior

As teachers provide choices in the classroom and freedom for students to explore and learn on their own, they are showing students that their ideas and opinions are valid and acceptable. They are in essence showing them respect and allowing them to take ownership of their education. By modeling for them the skills of respecting others, compromising, organizing, and listening, they are teaching them several necessary life skills. With this in mind, modeling appropriate and alternative behaviors are important for teachers to do. "This is critical, so develop an arsenal of strategies" (Charney, 1998, p.93).

For example, "It is especially important for teachers to model quiet voice levels when they are circulating among students and monitoring individual work" (McDaniel, 1986, p. 68). This will encourage students to lower their voices and listen to one another more effectively. By recognizing positive behaviors such as listening carefully to what friends, teachers, and parents have to say, respecting others, working in groups to accomplish a goal, and successfully juggling several tasks, the inappropriate behaviors may begin to diminish.

Teachers need to make a conscious effort to recognize students who are on-task and who are consistently behaving appropriately. However, teachers often do just the opposite. "Teacher recognition of appropriate, rather than inappropriate behaviors, and achievements rather than deficits, can also promote a positive classroom atmosphere" (Stainback, Stainback, & Froyen, 1987, p.15). By acknowledging those students, they are reinforcing good behavior and showing them respect, which they will hopefully appreciate. "To give respect is to get respect. Many teachers are busy during the day. They don't need young adults misbehaving. If you respect your

teachers, they will have respect for you. We all want to be respected because it makes us feel good, it helps our self-esteem, and it will help us grow to maturity" (Massing, 1996, p.1).

Especially in group activities and team sports, respecting one another and working together are often positively rewarded. Teamwork, sportsmanship, and respect can be taught not only in the classroom, but also in physical education class and through interscholastic athletics and clubs. For example, at Site C teams are required to establish a team identity by coming up with a name for themselves to create team unity. At the end of each game, they are also encouraged to shake hands with the opposing team to demonstrate good sportsmanship and respect for one another. Sports and other extra-curricular activities can be very rewarding and personally gratifying for students who are searching for something more fulfilling at school. However, students can learn how to be positively rewarded through classroom cooperative activities as well. At Sites A and B, students give group presentations and the audience later discusses the positive skills and techniques that were demonstrated in the presentation. These activities can, too, be self-gratifying and may decrease disruptive behaviors if students can find a way to achieve a common goal.

Cooperative Learning

One way to earn the respect of peers and feel personally gratified is to learn the skill of compromising through cooperative learning.

> Cooperative group structuring, in which the group as a whole is assigned a common goal, tends to promote more positive, goal-oriented student behavior than structures in which students are encouraged to work alone with the purpose of either outperforming each other (competition) or meeting a set criterion (individualistic learning). (Stainback, Stainback, & Froyen, 1987, p.15)

"Collaboration or 'group work' is a means of enhancing learning that teachers have been using for many years" (Squaw Peak School, 1998, p. 3). A teacher needs to carefully select lessons that are conducive to working in groups to foster learning. "If assignments are appropriately selected and presented, such problems can be substantially reduced" (Stainback, Stainback, & Froyen, 1987, p.15).

More specifically, these problems that generally occur are off-task behaviors such as not listening to one another and not respecting each others' opinions and ideas. "Another consideration in grouping students to prevent the occurrence of inappropriate behavior is to organize activities in a cooperative rather than competitive or individualistic manner" (Stainback, Stainback, & Froyen, 1987, p.15). The cooperative classroom must be carefully structured, however. Once teachers get to know the capabilities and personalities of the students, they can then begin to assign students to base groups which will be their group for the duration of the course. It is important for teachers to keep several things in mind while selecting base groups in the classroom. Unlike task groups, which are groups selected to work together for one class period, base groups "...work together several times a week for at least a month and perhaps as much as a year" (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991, p.35). "Base groups consist of three to five students randomly mixed to ensure heterogeneity of ability, motivation, social skills, sex, race, and ethnic backgrounds. They are the classroom glue. In base groups, students develop their teamwork, build trust, and solidify friendships" (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991, p.35).

> There are a variety of uses for the base groups. In addition to the team bonding activities, social skill practice and goal evaluations, base groups serve as a place to review the weeks work, discuss current events, connect the themes and topics studied in various content areas, plan social events, work out differences and solve problems. In essence,

they are a safe and secure home environment that encourages positive interactions, trust and friendship development (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991, p.35-6).

There are also certain roles that students will need to play within their groups if the tasks are to go smoothly and they are to bond together. Everyone needs to feel important, especially in a cooperative group. Each person should also have a role. They need to feel as if they are all key components to making the group a success. The teacher should assign a reader for each assignment, a recorder to write down all of the important information and write out the assignment, and a checker to begin each task and make sure students stay focused (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991).

From there, students may begin to develop their own roles within the group over the course of time. At times, a leader and an encourager will also emerge. These transformations are critical to the success of a group. As the group continues to work together, they may also begin to feel a sense of unity and pride. This can be fostered by having the group think of a team name, mascot, and logo to promote team spirit. When students feel as they are a part of a "team" and their "team members" are counting on them to succeed, they will inadvertently exhibit less disruptive behaviors. A positive environment that utilizes cooperative grouping can create a positive atmosphere for learning, promote positive social skills, and decrease disruptive behaviors.

Johnson and Johnson, two experts in the field, theorized that cooperative learning, if used regularly and consistently, would help students to develop their social skills in a positive and productive way with guided practice (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991). For example, in physical education, guided practice is often used when teaching the rules of a new sport or game. The students will ultimately be placed in groups or teams, but the teacher needs to show (rather

than tell) how to accomplish a goal or win the game. The same is also true in the traditional classroom. Teachers need to show students the right way to interact within their groups and encourage them to succeed. This can be done by actually joining the groups on a regular basis to monitor their interaction, keep them on track, and lead them in the right direction. This will also help the teachers to get a feel for the individual roles within the groups and how well the students are adjusting to the group setting. If a teacher expects a group to succeed, this attitude will give confidence to the groups members and, hopefully, motivate the group to do well.

Promote a Positive Attitude and Environment

"Expectations and plans for success, rather than failure, can help foster positive attitudes in students regarding their own classroom behavior and the behavior of their peers" (Stainback, Stainback, & Froyen, 1987, p.15). A teacher's "plan for success" needs to motivate students by using a relevant, yet challenging, curriculum. "If students are actively involved in meaningful and interesting learning that allows them to simultaneously be challenged and feel successful, then the chances of students misbehaving are decreased" (Costa, Bellanca, & Fogarty, 1992, p. 109). One way to make the material relevant for students is to provide a connection between school and their own lives. "I strongly believe that intrinsic motivation is the key to motivating students. To teach a relevant, exciting curriculum and relate it to the students' lives is critical" (Hanson, 1998, p. 29). By allowing students to make these connections, the disruptive behaviors may naturally decrease.

In addition, when a student is intrinsically motivated, he or she will be more apt to learn and stay on-task. "When a classroom is run on children's natural motivation, emphasis is on learning and being part of the environment, not on rewards and other external reinforcers that take away from the essentials of school" (Rehmke-Ribary, 1998, p.1). Intrinsic motivation can be

achieved by making learning fun. "A better way to motivate students to learn dull material is to give them the opportunity to achieve some goal..." (Failure of Extrinsic Motivation, 1998, p. 1). When students are working toward a common goal they will strive for success. "Some suggestions which might have more permanent influence are based on the principle that rarely can you make people do things, but you can create circumstances under which they want to, and even get satisfaction out of the fact that they did" (Bell, 1998, p.1).

The use of positive reinforcement will also produce a happier, less defensive climate which may increase learning time. Teachers need to make a conscious effort to focus on the good behavior rather than the bad behavior. Often teachers will need to seek out the good behavior because it may be hidden and need to be brought out, especially if a student is very subtle in his or her own ways. "A teacher would do better to ignore minor misbehavior, while identifying and praising good behavior" (McDaniel, 1986, p.73). Students who achieve this level of satisfaction will in turn be less likely to exhibit disruptive behaviors.

These solutions may help to decrease disruptive behaviors in the classroom and increase learning time. By increasing parental involvement in the schools, modeling appropriate behaviors in front of the students, providing transfer and showing relevance for students to the real world and their personal lives, recognizing and responding positively to appropriate behavior, using cooperative learning groups to teach peer interaction and respect, and promoting a positive environment, teachers may be able to minimize classroom disturbances and maximize the students' educational experience.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of appropriate modeling, working in cooperative learning groups, parental involvement, and motivational techniques during September 1999, through December 1999, the

sixth- through eighth-grade targeted language arts and physical education classes will decrease disruptive behaviors and a lack of respect for authority and peers, as measured by teacher checklists, teacher surveys, and student surveys. In order to accomplish the targeted objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Creating activities that will help foster more parental involvement.
2. Implementing procedures and methods that guide adults in modeling appropriate behavior.
3. Showing students the relevance of material and helping them with transference to their lives.
4. Recognizing those students who set good examples by consistently modeling good behavior.
5. Initiating cooperative learning activities to reinforce appropriate behavior and respect.
6. Developing a positive environment that uses effective motivational techniques for learning.

Project Action Plan

I. Data Collection For Evidence That Problems Exist (Sept)

- A. Teacher Checklist
  - 1. Fill out checklist on specific student behavior.
  - 2. Use as evidence that problems exist
- B. Teacher Survey
  - 1. Fill out survey on students based on general student behavior observed.
  - 2. Use as evidence that problems exist.
- C. Student Survey
  - 1. Send home consent forms.
  - 2. Have students fill out surveys for a completion grade.
  - 3. Use as evidence that problems exist.
- D. Observations and Anecdotes

1. Keep logs of personal experiences with disruptive behaviors as evidence.
2. Observe students while working in groups as evidence.

II. Increase Parent Involvement In School Activities (Sept/Oct-June)

A. Send home a letter with dates where parents can come in to observe group work.

B. Speak to principal and teachers about changing assemblies to "parent nights."

C. Send home weekly progress reports noting positive and negative behavior.

D. Make one parent call per day to acknowledge students who *are* behaving.

E. Devise a handout for other teachers to send home to involve their parents more.

III. Modeling Respect (Oct-Jun)

A. Define respect and discuss "Character Counts" (one class period).

B. Have students list things that they can do that show respect (5 mins).

C. List "respectful" acts on board as students brainstorm (5 mins).

D. Devise a classroom poster of these respectful acts to use as a reference (20 mins).

E. Be aware of how we, as teachers, treat the students (all year).

F. Explain to the students how they need to respect others ideas in groups (all year).

G. Explain to the students how team games involve respecting others (all year).

H. As a rule for the year, incorporate the topic of respect in every lesson or game.

IV. Incorporate Motivational Techniques and Positive Reinforcement (Sept-Jun)

A. Challenge students to use their abilities and imaginations (all year).

B. Use multiple intelligences to reach all students (vary intelligences all year).

C. Reinforce good behavior and make them aware of their full potential (all year).

V. Analyze and Disseminate Results of Surveys, Checklists, and Observations (Nov/Dec)

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of these interventions, students will repeat the classroom behavior survey and discuss what they have learned to determine if disruptive behaviors and respect have improved. The sixth- through eighth-grade teachers will repeat the teacher survey and checklist as well. The researchers will assess disruptive behaviors through the student behavior checklist, the teacher surveys and checklists, and through interviews and observations. Both pre- and post-data collections will be conducted using this assessment plan.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objectives for this project are shown in the following section. The researchers used surveys, checklists, and anecdotal evidence to support the claim that disruptive behaviors, including a lack of respect for authority and peers, exist in the middle school classroom.

Project Objectives

Sixth through eighth grade students were targeted at the different sites because they exhibited disruptive behaviors such as talking out, being unprepared for class, socializing, using inappropriate language, and responding inappropriately. Evidence that these problems exist is illustrated below in the intervention implementation summary.

Intervention Implementation Summary

Several intervention strategies were used to decrease disruptive behaviors over the course of the year. These strategies included increased parent involvement, modeling respect, cooperative learning activities and team games, using motivational techniques, and positive discipline.

September was devoted to surveying students and teachers to provide evidence that the problems exist. After the surveys were conducted, the researchers passed out an information sheet to staff members that described possible strategies for decreasing the disruptive behavior indicated in the surveys. Also in September, motivational techniques and positive discipline

strategies were used from the first day of school and parents were contacted regarding the surveys. The researchers also began making one parent call per day to maintain communication between school and home. In October, teachers began incorporating respect into daily lessons and base groups were formed for cooperative learning activities. Teachers also began to send home weekly progress reports to those parents whose children were falling below the class expectancy level. In November, parents were contacted regarding conferences and their child's progress. They were also invited in to the classroom for a parent day at the end of the month. Cooperative learning games were also employed in the classroom at least three times a week. In December, the results of the surveys and checklists were disseminated, and a letter was sent home to parents with dates for upcoming events. In January, the post-tests were given to the same teachers and the students for a comparison between first quarter student behavior and second quarter student behavior. The intervention was consistent throughout at all three sites. The next section provides an analysis of the results after the intervention was completed.

Presentation of Analysis of Results

Surveys and checklists were re-administered in January to assess whether or not the intervention was successful. The same students and teachers were given the original surveys and checklists as they were given in the first quarter to assess if behavior improved from the first quarter to the second. After the surveys and checklists were completed in January, the teachers were interviewed by the researchers to determine the effectiveness of the intervention strategies. The next section discusses the students' post-survey results and the trends that occurred.

Student Surveys

The interventions were conducted by site to reevaluate the initial results of the student surveys. The results of the student survey post-tests differed slightly from the teacher results at

all three sites. The students at all three sites indicated an improvement in their behavior. After months of intervention, students seemed more aware of what teachers considered to be disruptive. The results of the students' post-surveys are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Student Post-Survey Results (By Percentage Per Site)

	Always			Sometimes			Hardly Ever			Never		
Site	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
I Am Accepting Of Others	30	20	20	70	75	75	0	5	5	0	0	0
I Am Willing To Compromise	46	38	35	54	50	55	0	12	10	0	0	0
I Am Supportive In Words	70	60	55	30	40	45	0	0	0	0	0	0
I Am Supportive In Actions	45	40	35	55	60	45	0	0	20	0	0	0
I Bring Materials To Class	53	50	90	47	45	10	0	5	0	0	0	0
I Know What Is Expected	75	70	70	25	30	30	0	0	0	0	0	0
I Follow Classroom Rules	71	65	60	29	30	40	0	5	0	0	0	0
I Have Positive Attitude	35	35	30	60	60	70	5	5	0	0	0	0
I Do What Authority Tells Me	32	35	35	59	60	60	9	5	5	0	0	0

The students seemed to be more accepting of others in general at all three sites, but Sites B and C students indicated that they were less willing to compromise. Those ideas seemed to contradict themselves and may have had something to do with the cooperative activities and base groups used throughout the first quarter. Students may have had a better attitude at the beginning

of the year in terms of working in groups because they were excited about it, but they may have found that it is often hard to reach compromise when working together. All three sites showed an increase or a similar percentage in being supportive in words, bringing materials to class and following rules. Site A and B students indicated a more positive attitude, but Site C students felt that their attitudes in physical education were not as positive as they had been in the beginning of the year. Overall, however, the percentages did show some type of behavioral improvement at Sites A, B, and C. The next section discusses the results of the teacher post-surveys and checklists.

Teacher Surveys and Checklists

The interventions for the teacher post-surveys and checklists were also conducted consistently by site. The teacher surveys and checklists did reveal some type of improvement in student behavior, just as the students themselves indicated in their surveys. The surveys and checklists also revealed that teachers were generally pleased with the improvements students made from the beginning of the school year regarding their classroom behavior, even over the span of one quarter of the school year. Teachers also felt that by January more classroom time was spent teaching as opposed to disciplining, and students were exhibiting more respectful behaviors toward their teachers and their peers. They also seemed more aware of what disrespectful acts their teachers deemed inappropriate. The results of the teacher surveys and checklists are presented in Tables 9 and 10.

Table 9

Teacher Post-Survey Results (By Percentage Per Site)

	Always			Sometimes			Hardly Ever			Never		
Site	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Students Raise Hands	40	45	10	60	45	80	0	10	10	0	0	0
Students Support Rules	35	30	25	65	70	65	0	0	10	0	0	0
Students Are Prepared	40	20	85	55	70	15	5	10	0	0	0	0
Students Are Supportive	40	25	20	45	70	75	15	5	5	0	0	0
Students Respect Authority	55	25	20	35	60	75	10	15	5	0	0	0
Students Respect Peers	30	20	15	60	75	75	10	5	10	0	0	0
Students Accept Instruction	45	25	20	45	60	60	10	15	20	0	0	0
Students Accept Others	55	35	25	35	60	70	10	5	5	0	0	0

Table 10

Behavioral Post-Checklist Results (By Percentage Per Site)

Site	A	B	C
Talking Out	35	68	75
Unprepared For Class	28	55	30
Socializing	35	70	85
Inappropriate Language	15	15	42
Inappropriate Responses	40	45	48

Site A's surveys and checklists revealed the greatest amount of improvement of all three sites, especially in the area of students accepting others' abilities. Students became more respectful and less critical of others ideas, beliefs, and suggestions as they began to gel as a unit. At Sites B and C, the surveys and checklists revealed less improvement among students than at Site A.

At Site B, many teachers saw some improvement in classroom behavior but were not as positive overall about student improvement as teachers at Site A were. Many teachers did indicate that students were better about talking out and raising their hands in class, though. Classroom discussions were also more productive as students became more comfortable speaking in front of their teachers and their peers. The students were also better at accepting others ideas, just as the students at Site A were.

At Site C, interviews indicated that the improvement among student behaviors was the lowest of all three sites. However, there was mass improvement in the area of students being prepared for the days' activities, especially in physical education class. The students were consistently more prepared with their uniform and gym shoes during the second quarter. Some improvement was also noted in the area of inappropriate language, but physical education teachers seemed to hear it the most. The next section focuses on the post-survey and post-checklist interviews with teachers at all three sites which were conducted for clarification of the survey and checklist results.

Teacher Interviews

After the teachers and the students completed the post-surveys and checklists, the researchers spoke with several of the teachers that participated in the surveys to review the post-survey results. The researchers asked them whether or not they felt the interventions in their

classrooms were successful and what they would continue to do in the future. From the teachers, the consensus was that they would like to see more improvement in their students' behavior and agreed that they would like to continue the intervention for the entire year with the same students. Although students appeared to be more conscious of their behaviors, they were not yet at the level that the teachers expected them to be at. Some teachers indicated that this type of classroom ideal may never be achieved, though; students are a product of many different things, and an adolescent may not have the physical or mental maturity to act appropriately in all situations. With this in mind, the researchers came to the following conclusions regarding the study of disruptive behaviors in the classroom.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This section reaches conclusions and offers recommendations based on the intervention done by the researchers on the topic of disruptive behaviors. The conclusions reached are primarily based on the teacher post-surveys and checklists, post-intervention interviews, and the student surveys taken in January of the school year after the intervention research was analyzed. The conclusions were also reached by comparing early data with the data compiled after the intervention was complete.

Student Surveys

The post-intervention surveys revealed an overall awareness regarding what is considered inappropriate in the classroom. The students felt that their disruptive behaviors decreased since the beginning of the school year, even though their teachers indicated that more improvement was needed. The surveys were consistent at all three sites indicating some behavioral improvement and a heightened consciousness of respectful behaviors and proper classroom etiquette. The researchers were pleased that the students considered their actions, how they

behaved in the classroom, and how their behaviors effected others. The next section discusses the conclusions reached based on the teacher surveys and checklists.

Teacher Surveys and Checklists

The surveys and checklists, as well as the post-intervention interviews, revealed a slight overall improvement in student behavior in the classroom. Sites A, B, and C all reported an increase in respectful behavior as well. The pre-intervention surveys as compared to post-intervention surveys, checklists, and interviews indicated that there was a slight increase in positive student behavior. Based on the student-survey results, the teacher-survey and teacher-checklist results, and the teacher interviews, the researchers suggest the following recommendations.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are recommended by the researchers to continue to decrease disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Teachers need to continue with the intervention throughout the entire school year, focus on team-building and cooperative groups year-round by using cross-curricular activities and games, motivate students to do their best at all times, practice positive discipline as a basis for dealing with classroom problems, keep in contact with parents even if they are often hard to reach, and always remember to model the appropriate behavior that they wish to see from their students.

Based on the checklists, surveys, and interviews with other teachers, the researchers suggest that it is important for teachers to continue with the intervention for the entire school year because students need to understand that decreasing disruption and learning how to respect others is a process that takes time and patience. Although some improvement was noted, a substantial improvement was not documented from quarter one through quarter two. The

intervention will not be successful if the teacher gives up in the middle of the year and does not continue to employ the solution strategies year-round. Students need to be constantly reminded how important good behavior is in the classroom and how learning time increased as disruptive behaviors decrease.

Teachers need to also continue to use the base groups that they formed early in the year because improvement in behavior was again noted, but not a significant enough improvement was made. Teachers felt that it was beneficial to use base groups based on the positive changes in student behavior and would like to continue the process. Cooperative group learning can help students help themselves, and students can learn the appropriate social skills when working in a group over an extended period of time. They will learn how to respect one another and will learn more with the help of their peers. Students tend to work harder in groups so as not to let down the other members, and they begin to learn the art of compromise as well even if it is difficult to do.

In addition, teachers need to continue to motivate students as individuals and as members of a group. Team-building activities can boost a student's self-confidence and motivate him or her to succeed. Teachers can also use friendly competition as a motivational technique and as a way to increase student performance. Teachers who effectively motivate students are usually those who are enthusiastic about the material and who find ways for healthy student interaction.

The interaction between teacher and student throughout the year is equally important. When a teacher uses positive discipline to deal with the disruptions that frequently occur, the relationship between teacher and student is strengthened, and the student feels as if he or she is being treated with respect. Teachers need to incorporate positive discipline strategies into their repertoire in terms of dealing with disruptive behaviors. It is not recommended that teachers stop

using these techniques mid-year and resort to treating children with disrespect by embarrassing them in front of their peers. There are better ways to deal with such problems, and teachers and students alike will benefit from a healthy, open classroom where mutual respect is a common practice.

Mutual respect can be also be gained through increased parent contact. Students will feel a sense of joy if their teachers call their parents with regards to how well they are doing, which is reinforcement for those students who do as they are told and who consistently model appropriate behavior for others. However, contacting parents must continue on a regular basis and cannot end when the intervention is complete. Teachers need to continue to invite parents in, inform them of classroom activities, and call them on a regular basis, regardless of how their child has been doing. This will promote an active teacher/student/parent relationship when all are working together for the good of the child.

Finally, teachers need to take responsibility for being positive role models and model appropriate behavior at all times. It can be difficult to always be conscious of how one's actions will be seen by others, but that is one of the many things a teacher must consider in such a profession. Students are extremely influential, and often there is not a positive role model at home to follow. That is why teachers must always model the behavior that they wish to see from their students even after the intervention is complete. By modeling such behavior, students will begin to see how they should act and will begin to understand what is expected of them. Teachers must model good behavior all year because it is not feasible to expect students to continue to act appropriately when his or her teacher no longer does. Often actions do speak louder than words.

Summary

The researchers were ultimately pleased with the results of the intervention. Although the teachers felt that more time was needed to see a significant improvement in students' behavior, the students felt that they had improved and were more consciously aware of how they were acting. The students also seemed to be more accepting of the consequences for disruptive behaviors when these disruptions were actually explained to them and brought to their attention.

The overall results indicated a positive change in the way students behaved, but the researchers concluded that an intervention of three months cannot significantly change a student's behavior or entire way of thinking. It is a process that needs to continue over the course of the entire year. In order to truly be successful, a teacher needs to use the recommended intervention strategies on a regular basis over an extended amount of time before there will be a permanent reduction in classroom disruptions. These disruptions which occur on a regular basis can detract from the time spent on teaching and learning. If a concerted effort is made to permanently reduce the number of disruptive behaviors that occur over the course of the school year, the teacher can spend more time instructing and guiding students in the right direction toward a complete education.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT SURVEY

Student Survey

Directions: Circle the number that best describes your classroom behavior.

	Always	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
1. I am accepting of other person's ideas.	3	2	1	0
2. I am willing to compromise.	3	2	1	0
3. I am supportive in words.	3	2	1	0
4. I am supportive in actions.	3	2	1	0
5. I bring all necessary supplies supplies to class.	3	2	1	0
6. I know what is expected of me each day	3	2	1	0
7. I follow classroom rules.	3	2	1	0
8. I bring a positive attitude to class	3	2	1	0
9. I do what an authority figure tells me to do without questioning.	3	2	1	0

APPENDIX B

BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST

Behavior Checklist

Teacher: _____ Date: _____ Grade: _____

Student Name	Talking Out	Unprepared for Class	Socializing	Inappropriate Language	Inappropriate Responses
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
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37.					

APPENDIX C

TEACHER SURVEY

Teacher Survey

Dear Colleague,

I am currently attending St. Xavier University earning my masters degree. As part of my coursework, I need to complete an Action Research Project. My group's topic is disruptive student behaviors and student disrespect toward authority and peers. As part of my research, I am asking that you fill out this survey and return it to my mailbox by _____.

Thank you for your time and expertise!

Directions: Circle the number that best describes your feelings and/or observations regarding students' disruptive behaviors and a lack of respect.

	Always	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
1. Students raise their hands to participate.	3	2	1	0
2. Students support the classroom rules.	3	2	1	0
3. Students are physically prepared for the day's activities.	3	2	1	0
4. Students are supportive of others' and their ideas in class discussions.	3	2	1	0
5. Students respond to authority figures in a respectful manner.	3	2	1	0
6. Students are respectful of others' ideas while working in cooperative groups.	3	2	1	0
7. Students are accepting of your instructions without challenging, disagreeing or arguing.	3	2	1	0
8. Students are accepting of others' abilities both physically and mentally.	3	2	1	0